



July 11, 2020

Dear Superintendent Juneau,

The SEA recognizes that planning for the opening of the 2020-2021 school year is challenging and raises many concerns for families and staff in the midst of the global pandemic.

Seattle takes pride in being innovative, and we had looked forward to working in collaboration to reimagine how schools could reopen safely while meeting the needs of learners most impacted by the building closures.

However, from the beginning, there has not been a true sense of collaboration. We raised concerns early on, and throughout, that Engagement Teams were hastily devised, the overall process was rushed, and the establishment of an arbitrary June 19 deadline inhibited participants from engaging in meaningful discussion. Additionally, there was limited time to authentically engage families of color in the Engagement Team process, engagement that has yet to be conducted in a meaningful way.

We recognize the many challenges facing families, students, staff and the district in re-envisioning what the start of the new school year could look like. SEA shared the interest of a collaborative process through interest-based bargaining to collectively work towards an agreement that would address these issues. Unfortunately, recent communications show there is not a shared interest in a collaborative process. It is clear that the district is engaged in positional bargaining and has already made decisions about the reopening of schools before the joint process has had an opportunity to begin to address the numerous issues and concerns of educators in ensuring the health and safety of our community.

First, the district took a positional approach by contracting with an outside organization named Attuned to develop remote learning practices rather than collaborating with the frontline expertise of SEA at the bargaining table. In addition, the district presented its model to the School Board on June 30 before reaching any agreements with SEA about the impacts it would have on our members. Now, the July 10 email communication from Wyeth Jessee to Elementary Principals outlining the PreK-Kindergarten 2020-2021 schedule clearly shows decisions have already been made on in-person learning and the number of days students will be in buildings. This information has not been shared with the SEA bargaining team during the IBB process. All these examples demonstrate that the district has taken a positional approach to bargaining rather than a collaborative IBB process. Moreover, there continues to be a disturbing disconnect between the information provided to SEA and the information being sent to SPS staff and families.

Given the time available, and the evidence that the district is not committed to the collaborative process, it does not make sense to continue with Interest Based Bargaining. We are requesting the district's reopening plan and decisions on models so we can begin traditional negotiations on the impact and implementation of the district's chosen model for opening of schools in the fall.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Matter - SEA President
Gwendolyn Jimerson - SEA Vice President
Vallerie Fisher - SEA Treasurer
Marla Rasmussen - Paraprofessional President
Elizabeth Ward-Robertson – SAEOP President
Stan Strasner - Substitutes President
Yvette De La Cruz - SEA Executive Director